

STREET STANDARDS DOCKET WORK - 2009
RELATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

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SKINNY STREETS – RESIDENTIAL ACCESS STREETS BACKGROUND AND CITY OF RENTON RELATED POLICIES

Why create skinny streets in neighborhoods? Allowing newly-paved residential streets to be narrower provides many benefits to area residents. Skinny streets help preserve neighborhood livability, while improving access to homes. Some benefits are:

Maintain neighborhood character: Construction of a wide paved street to replace a narrow unimproved road can change a neighborhood's atmosphere. Skinny streets reduce the impact on slopes and contours; on yards and on neighborhood self-image.

Lower construction costs: Construction of narrower streets costs less. This means that residents who want to improve existing streets are able to do so for less money and developers can create new neighborhood streets less expensively.

Save vegetation and trees: In existing or new neighborhoods, narrower paving widths reduce the need to cut trees and shrubs along the street.

Reduce stormwater runoff: Paved streets are a major source of stormwater runoff. Pollutants from autos, as well as fertilizer, pesticides and other contaminants, are collected in stormwater, which flows into storm sewers. Eventually, this dirty water reaches area streams and rivers. Reducing pavement reduces stormwater runoff and allows more water to soak directly into the ground.

Encourage traffic safety: Narrower streets discourage non-neighborhood traffic and force drivers to slow down.

Encourage better land-use: As stewards of our natural resources, we know that streets aren't the best use of existing undeveloped land. With skinny streets, in new developments we have more room to house our growing population while reducing the amount of land reserved for traffic use.

- Above information from Office of Transportation, Portland which created narrow residential streets as well as 'queuing streets' standards in 1991. Similar statewide standards followed.

CITY OF RENTON RELATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

Transportation Element

Street Network Section

- *Objective T-A:* Create a comprehensive street system that provides reasonable vehicular circulation throughout the City while enhancing the safety and function of the local transportation system.
- *Policy T-15.* Provide a balance between protecting neighborhoods from increased through traffic while maintaining access to neighborhoods.
- *Policy T-16.* Street networks should connect through the development to existing streets, avoid "cul-de-sac" or dead end streets, and be arranged in a grid street pattern (or a flexible grid street system if there are environmental constraints).

Environmental and Natural Resources Section

- *Objective T-CC:* Ensure the long-term protection of the quality of water resources of the City of Renton.
- *Objective T-DD:* Reduce the impact on water quality from vehicular pollutants associated with run-off from impervious transportation facility surfaces.

Community Design Element

Natural Areas Section

- *Policy CD-8.* During development, significant trees, either individually or in stands, should be preserved, replaced, or as a last option, relocated.

Site Planning Section

- *Objective CD-D:* New development should have an interconnected road network that supports multi-modal transportation.
- *Policy CD-19.* Land should be subdivided into blocks sized so that walking distances are minimized and convenient routes between destination points are available.
- *Policy CD-25.* Streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian or bike paths should be arranged as an interconnecting network. Dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs should be discouraged. A grid or “flexible grid” pattern of streets and pathways, with a hierarchy of widths and corresponding traffic volumes, should be used.
- *Policy CD-26.* Interpret development standards to support plats designed to incorporate vehicular and pedestrian connections between plats and neighborhoods. Small projects composed of single parcels and/or multiple parcels of insufficient size to provide such connections, should include future street stubs. Future street connections should be clearly identified to notify residents of future roadway connections.
- *Policy CD-28.* New streets should be designed to provide convenient access and a choice of routes between homes and parks, schools, shopping, and other community destinations.

Landscaping Section

- *Policy CD-79.* Existing mature vegetation and distinctive trees should be retained and protected in developments.

Streets, Sidewalks, and Streetscape Section

- *Objective CD-O:* Promote development of attractive, walkable neighborhoods and shopping areas by ensuring that streets are safe, convenient, and pleasant for pedestrians.
- *Policy CD-95.* The design of pedestrian-oriented environments should address safety as a first priority. Safety measures should include generous separation of cars and pedestrians, reducing the number of curb cuts and driveways, having numerous, well-marked street crossings, and providing street and sidewalk lighting.
- *Policy CD-98.* Block lengths and widths should be maintained at the pedestrian-friendly standards that predominate within the downtown.
- *Objective CD-P:* Develop a system of residential streets, sidewalks, and alleys that serve both vehicles and pedestrians.

- *Policy CD-100.* A citywide street and sidewalk system should provide linkages within and between neighborhoods. Such system should not unduly increase pass-through traffic, but should create a continuous, efficient, interconnected network of roads and pathways throughout the City.
- *Policy CD-102.* Residential streets should be constructed to the narrowest widths (distance from curb to curb) feasible without impeding emergency vehicle access.

Economic Development Element

- *Objective ED-A:* Use public resources efficiently to leverage economic development.
- *Policy ED-9.* Adopt land use and zoning that is supportive of responsible economic development.

Environmental Element

- *Objective EN-B:* Protect and enhance water quality of surface water resources.
- *Policy EN-37.* Promote development design which minimizes impermeable surface coverage by limiting site coverage and maximizing the exposure of natural surfaces.

Housing Element

Cost of Regulation, Permitting Time, and Fees Section

- *Policy H-5.* Create and maintain development standards that reduce the overall cost of housing as long as health and safety can be maintained.

Quality of Neighborhoods Section

- *Objective H-K:* Develop and maintain livable neighborhoods with a desirable quality of life.
- *Policy H-53.* Promote high quality residential living environments in all types of neighborhoods.
- *Policy H-57.* New single-family subdivisions should provide pedestrian and vehicular connections to adjoining residential development unless a determination is made that a physical feature of the site, such as a ravine, wetland or pre-existing developed property prevents practical implementation of this provision.

Land Use Element

- *Goals 7.* Promote new development and neighborhoods in the City that:
 - a) Contribute to a strong sense of community and neighborhood identity;
 - b) Are walkable places where people can live, shop, play, and get to work without always having to drive;
 - c) Are developed at densities sufficient to support public transportation and make efficient use of urban services and infrastructure;
 - d) Offer a variety of housing types for a population diverse in age, income, and lifestyle;
 - e) Are varied or unique in character;
 - f) Support “grid” and “flexible grid” street and pathway patterns where appropriate;
 - g) Are visually attractive, safe, and healthy environments in which to live;
 - h) Offer connection to the community instead of isolation; and
 - i) Provide a sense of home.

PLANTING STRIPS & STREET TREES BACKGROUND AND CITY OF RENTON RELATED POLICIES

Many benefits come from urban street trees and other vegetation in planting strips including:

- Reduced and more appropriate urban traffic speeds
- Create safer walking environments
- Convert streets, parking and walls into more aesthetically pleasing environments
- Less drainage infrastructure
- Increased security
- Soften and screen necessary street features
- Rain, sun, heat and skin protection
- Reduced harm from tailpipe emissions
- Reduced blood pressure, improved overall emotional and psychological health
- Lower urban air temperatures and decreased heat island effect
- Connection to nature and the human senses
- Longer pavement life
- Provides a lawn for a splash and spray zone, storage of snow, driveway elevation transition, etc.
- Filtering and screening agent
- Trees call for placemaking planting strips and medians
- Improved business
- Improved operations potential
- Lower Ozone
- Added value to adjacent homes, businesses, and tax base
- Gas transformation efficiency
- Time and travel perception
- Reduced road rage

Information above found at www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/22_benefits_208084_7.pdf

CITY OF RENTON RELATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

Community Design Element

Goals:

1. To raise the aesthetic quality of the City,
2. To strengthen the economy through high quality development, and
3. To ensure that a high quality of life is maintained as Renton evolves.

Landscaping Section

- *Policy CD-84.* Trees should be planted along residential streets, in parking lots requiring landscaping, and in other pervious areas as the opportunity arises. Trees should be retained whenever possible and maintained using Best Management Practices as appropriate for each type.
- *Policy CD-88.* Street trees and landscaping should be required for new development within the Valley to provide an attractive streetscape in areas subjected to a transition of land uses.
- *Policy CD-92.* Residential subdivisions and multi-family residential projects should include planting of street trees according to an adopted citywide landscape plan.

Streets, Sidewalks, and Streetscape Section

- *Objective CD-O:* Promote development of attractive, walkable neighborhoods and shopping areas by ensuring that streets are safe, convenient, and pleasant for pedestrians.
- *Policy CD-95.* The design of pedestrian-oriented environments should address safety as a first priority. Safety measures should include generous separation of cars and pedestrians, reducing the number of curb cuts and driveways, having numerous, well-marked street crossings, and providing street and sidewalk lighting.
- *Policy CD-103.* Landscaped parking strips should be considered for use as a safety buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles along arterials and collector streets.
- *Objective CD-P:* Develop a system of residential streets, sidewalks, and alleys that serve both vehicles and pedestrians.
- *Policy CD-110.* Street trees should be used to reinforce visual corridors along major boulevards and streets.

Economic Development Element

- *Summary:* The policies encourage the quality development necessary to sustain a high standard of living in Renton.
- *Objective ED-B:* Expand the retail and office base within the City.
- *Policy ED-9.* Adopt land use and zoning that is supportive of responsible economic development.

Housing Element

- *Goal #4.* Maintain, protect, and enhance the quality of life of Renton's residents.

Quality of Neighborhoods Section

- *Objective H-K:* Develop and maintain livable neighborhoods with a desirable quality of life.

GREEN AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT ELEMENTS WITHIN STREETS BACKGROUND AND CITY OF RENTON RELATED POLICIES

Reasons to include green and low impact development techniques in street design include:

- Reduce polluted stormwater entering rivers and streams;
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety;
- Reduce impervious surface so stormwater can infiltrate to recharge groundwater and surface water;
- Increase urban green space;
- Improve air quality and reduce air temperatures;
- Reduce demand on the city's sewer collection system and the cost of constructing expensive pipe systems;
- Address requirements of federal and state regulations to protect public health and restore and protect watershed health; and
- Increase opportunities for industry professionals

CITY OF RENTON RELATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

Transportation Element

Environmental and Natural Resources Chapter

- *Objective T-CC:* Ensure the long-term protection of the quality of water resources of the City of Renton.
- *Objective T-DD:* Reduce the impact on water quality from vehicular pollutants associated with run-off from impervious transportation facility surfaces.
- *Policy T-94.* Incorporate in transportation facilities vehicular pollutant and surface water run-off management and treatment techniques that maximize water quality.

Environmental Element

Surface Water Chapter

- *Objective EN-B:* Protect and enhance water quality of surface water resources.
- *Policy EN-4.* Limit discharges of pollutants such as chemicals, insecticides, pesticides, and other hazardous wastes to surface waters.

Stormwater Chapter

- *Policy EN-24.* Maintain and enhance natural drainage systems to protect water quality, reduce public costs, and prevent environmental degradation.
- *Policy EN-36.* Promote the return of precipitation to the soil at natural rates near where it falls through the use of detention ponds, grassy swales, and infiltration where feasible.
- *Policy EN-37.* Promote development design which minimizes impermeable surface coverage by limiting site coverage and maximizing the exposure of natural surfaces.

Ground Water Resources Chapter

- *Policy EN-43.* Emphasize the use of open ponding and detention, grassy swales, clean roof run-off, and other stormwater management techniques that maximize water quality and infiltration where appropriate and which will not endanger groundwater quality.

COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT GOALS

1. To raise the aesthetic quality of the City.
2. To strengthen the economy through high quality development.
3. To ensure that a high quality of life is maintained as Renton evolves.

Purpose Statement: The purpose of the Community Design Element is to establish policies that set standards for high quality development, improve the aesthetics and functionality of existing neighborhoods and commercial areas, and guide the development of new neighborhoods that are part of a better community. Recognizing that the exceptional quality of life in Renton is dependent upon a strong local economy, these policies are intended to further that economic health. They are based on the belief that a positive image and high quality development attracts more of the same.

Discussion: The objectives and policies adopted to meet these goals address issues related to both the natural and built environment such as: how the physical organization of development can create a desirable place to live; the importance of view protection; ways to improve the streetscape; principles of vegetation preservation, selection, and maintenance; principles of architectural and urban design; and the function of urban separators.

STREETS, SIDEWALKS, AND STREETScape SECTION

Objective CD-O: Promote development of attractive, walkable neighborhoods and shopping areas by ensuring that streets are safe, convenient, and pleasant for pedestrians.

Policy CD-95. The design of pedestrian-oriented environments should address safety as a first priority. Safety measures should include generous separation of cars and pedestrians, reducing the number of curb cuts and driveways, having numerous, well-marked street crossings, and providing street and sidewalk lighting.

Policy CD-96. Aesthetic improvements along street frontages should be provided, especially for properties abutting major streets and boulevards. Incentives should be provided for the inclusion of streetscape amenities including: landscaping, public art, street furniture, paving, signs, and planting strips in developing and redeveloping areas.

Policy CD-97. Require significant pedestrian element in internal site circulation plans.

Policy CD-98. Block lengths and widths should be maintained at the pedestrian-friendly standards that predominate within the downtown.

Policy CD-99. Commercial Corridor intersections frequented by pedestrians, due to the nature of nearby uses or transit stops, should feature sidewalk pavement increased to form pedestrian corners and include pedestrian amenities, signage, and special design treatment that would make them identifiable as activity areas for the larger corridor.

Objective CD-P: Develop a system of residential streets, sidewalks, and alleys that serve both vehicles and pedestrians.

Policy CD-100. A citywide street and sidewalk system should provide linkages within and between neighborhoods. Such system should not unduly increase pass-through traffic, but should create a continuous, efficient, interconnected network of roads and pathways throughout the City.

Policy CD-101: Criteria should be developed to locate pedestrian and bicycle connections in the City. Criteria should consider:

- a) Linking residential areas with employment and commercial areas;
- b) Providing access along arterials;
- c) Providing access within residential areas;
- d) Filling gaps in the existing sidewalk system where appropriate; and
- e) Providing access through open spaces and building entries to shorten walking distances.

Policy CD-102. Residential streets should be constructed to the narrowest widths (distance from curb to curb) feasible without impeding emergency vehicle access.

Policy CD-103. Landscaped parking strips should be considered for use as a safety buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles along arterials and collector streets.

Policy CD-104. Intersections should be designed to minimize pedestrian crossing distance and increase safety for disabled pedestrians.

Policy CD-105. Evaluate existing intersections of arterial roadways for opportunities to create focal points, if such focal points do not reduce vehicular or pedestrian safety.

Policy CD-106. Alleys should be used where alleys currently exist to facilitate use of alley-accessed parking, for freight deliveries in commercial and industrial areas, and for the removal of refuse and recyclables.

Policy CD-107. Encourage designation of new alleys in redevelopment projects.

Policy CD-108. To visually improve the streetscape, increase the safety of perimeter sidewalks, and facilitate off-street parking, construction of alleys providing rear access to service entries and garages should be encouraged. Alleys are preferred in small-lot subdivisions to provide higher quality site planning that allows garage access from the rear and reduces curb cuts and building mass on narrow lots.

Policy CD-109. Sidewalks or walking paths should be provided along residential streets. Sidewalk width should be ample to safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrian traffic.

Policy CD-110. Street trees should be used to reinforce visual corridors along major boulevards and streets.

Policy CD-111. Street trees should be protected. If removal is necessary for municipal purposes such as infrastructure improvements or maintenance, trees should be replaced with the same, size, and type. Upon adoption of citywide standards, street trees should be upgraded consistent with those standards.

Policy CD-112. Appearance of parking lots should be improved by screening through appropriate combinations of landscaping, fencing, and berms.

Policy CD-113. Structural supports for overhead traffic signals should be designed to diminish visual impacts.

Policy CD-114. All utility lines should be placed underground.

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT GOALS NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Objectives: The Non-Motorized Chapter is based on the following objectives:

Objective T-K: Improve the non-motorized transportation system for both internal circulation and linkages to regional travel.

Objective T-L: Develop and maintain comprehensive trails system which provides non-motorized access throughout the City, maximizes public access to open space areas, and provides increased recreational opportunities for the public.

Objective T-M: Integrate Renton's non-motorized transportation needs into a comprehensive transportation system serving both local and regional users.

Objective T-N: Enhance and improve the non-motorized circulation system to, from, and within the City.

Objective T-O: Develop and designate appropriate pedestrian and bicycle commuter routes along existing minor arterial and collector arterial corridors.

Objective T-P: Improve the City's pedestrian and bicycle network to increase access to and circulation within the Urban Center - Downtown.

Policy T-47. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic should be accommodated within all areas of the City.

Policy T-48. Where right-of-way is available and bicycle demand justifies them, bicycle lanes should be marked and signed to accommodate larger volumes of bicycle traffic on select streets designated by the City.

Policy T-49. Pedestrian and bicycle movement across arterial intersections should be enhanced.

Policy T-50. Obstructions and conflicts that restrict pedestrian movement should be minimized on sidewalks, paths and other pedestrian areas.

Policy T-51. Convenient and safe pedestrian and bicycle access should be provided to and at the downtown Transit Center and all transit stops.

Policy T-52. Bicycle storage facilities and parking should be encouraged within development projects, in commercial areas and in parks.

Policy T-53. Secure bicycle parking facilities, such as bike lockers and bike racks should be provided at residential, commercial, and public establishments to encourage bicycle use.

Policy T-54. Streets and pedestrian paths in residential neighborhoods should be arranged as an interconnecting network and should connect to other streets.

Policy T-55. Pedestrian spaces should be emphasized and connected throughout the downtown.

Policy T-56. Pedestrians should be given priority use of sidewalks within the Urban Center – Downtown designated pedestrian areas.

Policy T-57. New pedestrian facilities should be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and existing facilities should be upgraded to improve accessibility.

Policy T-58. Non-motorized transportation should be developed in tandem with motorized transportation systems, recognizing issues such as safety, user diversity, and experiential diversity.

Policy T-59. Recognize the diversity of transportation modes and trip purposes of the following four groups: pedestrians, bicyclists, joggers and runners.

Policy T-60. Foot/bicycle separation should be provided wherever possible; however, where conflict occurs, foot traffic should be given preference.

Policy T-61. Adequate separation between non-motorized and motorized traffic should be provided to ensure safety.

Policy T-62. The adopted Long Range Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Plan should be coordinated with and be an integral component of the City's on-going transportation planning activities.

Policy T-63. Appropriate mitigation measures should be taken to address impacts on the City's transportation infrastructure. Contributions to the City's non-motorized circulation system will help alleviate such impacts.

Policy T-64. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be promoted not only as a viable means of transportation, but as an important method for maintaining overall health and fitness of Renton's citizens.